

BOOK REVIEW

PETER BERNHARDT. 2008. **Gods and Goddesses in the Garden: Greco/Roman Mythology and the Scientific Names of Plants.** (ISBN 0-8135-4266-9, hbk.). Rutgers University Press, 100 Joyce Kilmer Way, Piscataway, New Jersey 08854-8099, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.rutgerspress.rutgers.edu, 800-848-6224). \$24.95, 239 pp., illustrations, 9 1/2" × 6 1/2".

This is a book for the general reader as well as the botanist, anyone who has interest in western classical mythology and in plant taxonomy, and those who may have just casually wondered how plants got their names. Peter Bernhardt of St. Louis University and the Missouri Botanical Garden has given us other books that have piqued and satisfied the curiosities of reader-explorers. In this one he relates the tales of gods and heroes, of kings and queens, of nymphs, satyrs, and centaurs, and then one by one tells how and why taxonomists from Linnaeus to the present have adopted those classical names to different genera of plants. Both the tales and the naming are intriguing and evidence a good deal of exacting research. For example, he points out that with some exceptions nymphs and mortal women often became trees or woody vines (*Daphne*, *Carya*) while demigods and mortal men "dwindle into herbs and wildflowers" (*Crocus*, *Narcissus*).

In his final chapter he expresses hope that modern lack of interest in classical mythology will not impede the continued use of such names and that other cultures, such as Native American or those of the Far East, will also use the names of their own mythological figures in plant taxonomy.

Two comprehensive indices—one general that includes plant common names, taxonomists, and personages from myth, and another of scientific names of plants—make this interesting and readable work into a useful reference for any personal or public library.—*Joann Karges, Librarian (retired), Texas Christian University Library, Box 298400, Fort Worth, Texas 76129, U.S.A.*